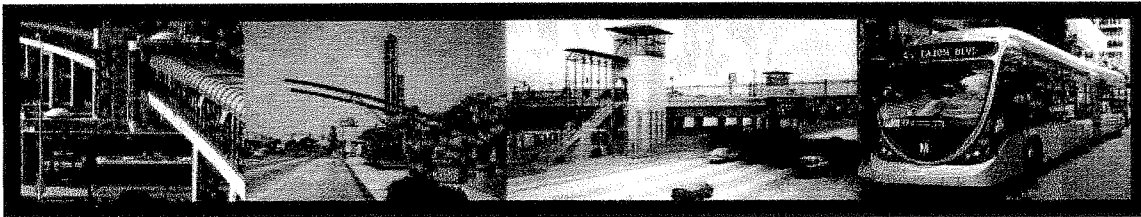


# SR-15 CenterLine Rapid Transit System and Stations

## Introduction:

- Construction of State Route 15 through Mid-City was a watershed event for this community, which long suffered impacts of 35,000 cars per day passing through its neighborhoods on surface streets.
- Recognizing the extraordinary circumstances surrounding this project, the design of this freeway segment was intensely negotiated with the community with the goal of making the new freeway both a regional asset and a **catalyst for neighborhood renewal**.
- Many design amenities resulted from this process, including the dedication of the freeway median for the exclusive use of rapid transit, and expanded over-crossings at the interchanges of SR-15 at University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard to serve as transit plazas.
- These commitments and mitigations were codified in **Memoranda of Understanding and Agreement between CalTrans and the City of San Diego** and other agencies, most notably in 1985-1993 timeframe.
- The transit service plans that would fulfill this promise were adopted as part of SANDAG's Mobility 2030 (the 2003 RTP).



## Immediate Challenge:

SR-15 "CenterLine" Rapid Transit System, a state-of-the-art bus rapid transit (BRT) system to be located in the center median area of the freeway, is at a critical juncture. The new 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is being prepared for adoption this summer. There are pressures to identify the I-15 corridor as a future HOV corridor (not needed in the Mid-City region before 2030, by CalTrans estimates). Further, SANDAG would like to designate the corridor as a key freight corridor in the Goods Movement Action Plan (GMAP), which will be incorporated into the 2007 RTP. A Project Study Report (PSR) conducted by CalTrans over the course of 2006 made clear that either of **these options, if adopted into the 2007 RTP, could prevent the CenterLine Rapid Transit System and Stations from being constructed as promised.**

The City of San Diego is the signatory to the 1985 Memorandum of Agreement and the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding with the State of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). These documents include promises to mitigate air and noise pollution impacts on Central Elementary School, divert truck traffic to I-805 to the maximum extent feasible and dedicate the center median area for use of a rapid transit system and stations accessed from the transit plaza's located at University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard overpasses.

**The City is the appropriate entity to ensure implementation of these agreements and the 2007 RTP is the appropriate place for this commitment to be reaffirmed.**

If the Centerline is ever to be built, it will require a firm policy statement by the City Council identifying the Centerline as a priority project. Only with the support of the Mayor and City Council will the City's

- Moving the BRT stations to the ramp side of the freeway (literally "sidelining" the system) eliminates any transit priority for the BRT through Mid-City. SANDAG's own studies have shown repeatedly that the in-line station configuration maximizes transit operation efficiency and improves potential ridership numbers.
- Ramp stops require that the BRT vehicles must cross surface street traffic, further degrading the level of service of traffic in our neighborhoods. Either the BRT will have complete signal priority, which will further back up these interchanges at street level, or else they will be delayed and fall short of the operational efficiency that is required. SANDAG's own studies represent that ridership will decrease in this scenario.

### **The Centerline is an Economic Development Engine**

- Effective transit is essential to connect the residents of this region to the economic mainstream of the San Diego region.
- The significant public investment in the In-Line stations creates confidence in the long-term commitment of transit resources to this community. This confidence is critical to attracting further private investment in the Mid-City area.
- The In-line stations create a more positive image of transit for residents of the area, attracting more choice riders.
- The Transit Plazas were created with retail space intended to be leased out to generate revenues to pay for maintenance activities at these stations. These spaces will only be viable for retail business if the plazas serve as central transfer points.

### **Immediate Opportunities to Accelerate CenterLine Rapid Transit Completion**

- The Redevelopment Agency has the opportunity to require financial commitments for operations in all subsequent DDAs for projects adjacent to the Centerline stations.
- City Heights redevelopment dollars can be contributed to these projects.
- The new Mid-City Facilities Finance Plan can include these and other facilities in their DIF calculations.

### **Actions Needed:**

- A City of San Diego Resolution reaffirming the 1985 MOA and 1993 MOU provisions requiring mitigation measures promised at the time of the freeway's design and construction, and requiring that the 2007 RTP identify and dedicate the center median area of the SR-15 freeway for the operation of the Mid City CenterLine rapid transit system and stations;
- Creation of a City CIP item to support construction costs of the stations through redevelopment funds, DIFs and other sources;
- Prioritization of the project in the City's Federal and State legislative and spending agenda and in pursuit of SANDAG funding opportunities; and
- Support expansion of express bus service as part of the implementation of the SANDAG and MTS Mid City Transit Network Plan.

delegation to SANDAG be able to come to the table with a clear mandate to insist on fulfillment of the promises made to this community over 20 years ago.

#### **Historical Support:**

- Rapid transit was part of the original agreements with the community in exchange for acceptance of the project and as mitigation for the construction and continuing impacts to the area as a result of the freeway.
- The original desire for the community was for a light-rail line (LRT) to run in the freeway center median; an alternate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system was promised as being more cost effective and capable for earlier implementation.

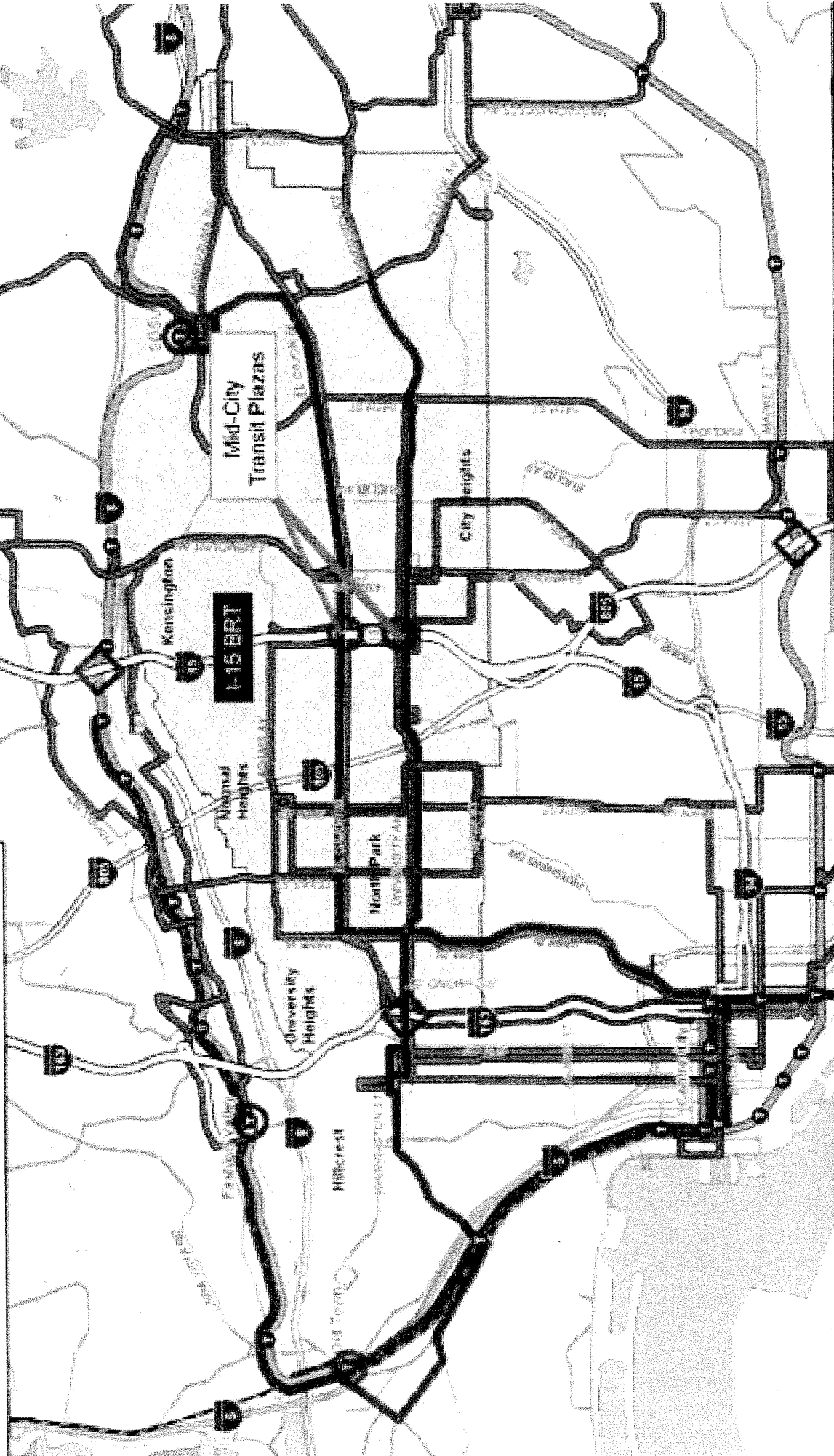
#### **INVESTMENTS made and ACTIONS taken based on these promises include:**

- The **Mid-City Communities Plan** was adopted, which identified El Cajon and I-15 as a regional serving hub, and University and I-15 as a local/sub-regional hub.
- The interchange at ECB & I-15 was **upzoned** to a maximum of 73 dwelling units to the acre – as compared to 35 DUA along the remainder of the Boulevard.
- The commercial zoning along both University and El Cajon was extended deeper into the residential neighborhoods on either side and special transitional zoning created to facilitate denser development along these corridors.
- The **City Heights Redevelopment Plan** was amended to reflect these changes, including an increase in the extent of the Agency's eminent domain authority to reflect these new transit corridor guidelines.
- The community spent over 3 years in developing specific development guidelines for these interchanges and the 20 square block corridor around the mid City SR-15 corridor (**Mid-City Transit Interchanges Project**).
- The community supported the development of the **Mid-City Transit Gateways**, built with over \$3 million in federal funds (via SANDAG) and nearly \$1 million in matching funds from the City of San Diego and its Redevelopment Agency to access the rapid transit system and in line stations located in the center median.
- The community sought and obtained **CCDC funds** for development of the Metro Villas affordable housing project in City Heights, under a City Council **Finding of Benefit** that the affordable housing in City Heights could serve the lower-income employees of downtown businesses because of its link, via transit, to the downtown area.
- The Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and SANDAG adopted the Mid City Transit Network Plan and **expanded service** on two commuter express lines using the interim off-ramp stations to get Mid City residents to job centers;
- The community sought and received designation of the Boulevard Marketplace as one of the City's Smart Growth, Transit Oriented **Pilot Villages**.

#### **The In-line Stations are Essential for Optimum Rapid Transit System Function:**

- The CenterLine median stations are safer for pedestrians, allowing them to make North-South to East-West connections without crossing traffic lanes. Ramp stops will increase substantially the number of pedestrians required to cross traffic lanes. This is unsafe for pedestrians and further degrades automobile traffic operations of these intersections at the neighborhood level.

# Mid-City Transit Network Plan



## Mid-City Study Area

Map by  
Tahara  
Manning  
Design, Inc.

- Tramway Stops
- Orange Line
- Blue Line
- MVE Project (Open 2005)

- Proposed Regional Hubs
- Existing Regional Hubs
- Bus routes
- Coaster

- Regional Service
- Corridor Service
- Local Service
- Neighborhood Service

## **Draft Resolution Regarding the Development of the Route 15 Centerline Bus Rapid Transit Stations and Operations**

Whereas the segment of State Route 15 through the Mid-City communities of San Diego was substantially completed in the year 2000; and,

Whereas prior to the construction of the freeway the community suffered from the negative impacts of over 40,000 cars per day passing through the community over its surface streets; and

Whereas the residents of Mid-City and the City of San Diego ("City") negotiated the design of this freeway segment in good faith with the California Department of Transportation ("CalTrans"); and

Whereas certain freeway design elements, operational practices and environmental mitigations were agreed to by the City and CalTrans and memorialized in Memoranda of Understanding in 1985, 1992 and 1993; and

Whereas the 1993 Memorandum included a commitment by CalTrans to dedicate the center lanes of the freeway for the exclusive use of a rapid transit line; and

Whereas the City of San Diego adopted the Mid-City Communities Plan in 1998 and the City Heights Redevelopment Plan in 1992 and 2000 with a intensification of land uses along the Route 15 corridor as a response to the commitment of high-speed transit in the corridor; and,

Whereas the Memorandum of May 14, 1985 included a commitment by CalTrans to direct truck traffic away from the project area onto the I-805; and

Whereas in a Memorandum of May 3, 1988 CalTrans committed to air quality monitoring and air quality abatement measures to protect the health of the children at Central Elementary School; and

Whereas CalTrans and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) are considering plans for High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and concentrated freight truck traffic in this segment of the Route 15 corridor to be included in the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan ("RTP"); and

Whereas CalTrans' 2006 Route 15 Corridor Project Study Report concludes that either dedicated freight or HOV lanes would preclude the use of the medians for transit as previously committed to;

**Therefore**, be it resolved that the City of San Diego, as party to these previous agreements, reaffirms its commitment to the terms of these Memoranda; and

Calls upon the San Diego Association of Governments, in its 2007 RTP, to identify the center lanes of the Mid -City segment of Route 15 for the exclusive use of the CenterLine Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and identify it as a priority project therein; and

Calls upon the California Department of Transportation and SANDAG to adopt a goods movement strategy that redirects trucks away from the Mid-City SR-15 corridor; and,

Commits the City to the creation of new City Capital Improvement Projects as needed to support the aforementioned agencies in the development of this transit line and stations; and,

Commits the City to include funding for the CenterLine BRT in its Federal and State legislative priorities; and,

Supports improved transit opportunities for the residents of this region as outlined in SANDAG's Mid-City Transit Network Plan of July 2005.